

## A PAIR OF CRANKS.

Continued from page 3.

sort of buffalo's grass, a few poles from the scanty fringe of box-elders on the little creek near by, and many days of tentative toil were the factors which produced at length a sod-house. On the clear moonlight night after its completion the new couple sat on the sweet soft grass near its rude door and discussed the achievement. "It is of course nothing but a hole in the ground," Calvin said, "but somehow, dear, I feel that it is our first home, and that we shall grow to love it." And the poor girl assented, a little pride in the corner of her heart inspiring her tears as she kissed him. She was proud in the possession of a man so strong, so capable, and this humble evidence was to her abundant hostage for the future of the destiny he could conquer, and which should be the heritage of both for many blessed years. At the same moment, Deborah was seated with her spouse on the other side of the little mound dwelling and administered her congratulations. "A pretty lookin' thing to be crowin' about. Nothin' but a hole in the ground, such as a kyote or prary dog could dig. Won't stan' a shower! Brought me all the way here out of the world to starve to death an' die in a hole."

"Deborah," said the old man solemnly, "I've had my share of trouble with you—not that I hev'n't given you some trouble—but Lord knows I've tried to do right by you. No, don't break in on me now. I've sumthin' to say. You must hear. I said to Calvin to-day, says I, when the time comes to meet real trouble, says I, Deborah'll meet it like a man, says I, an' neow I look to you, Deborah, to make it good." The old woman sniffed a moment and then rose and went to bed, the first to accept the lodging accommodations of the new house.

Then came the work of prairie-breaking with two yoke of oxen, another purchase, and the horses. It seemed when fairly started but play to the men, who alternately holding the plow and driving the team, never wearied of watching the lines of furrow rising on the plowshare and turning over unbroken, laying a continuous strip of smooth, upturned sod almost the entire length of the half mile "land." Then came the harrowing and seeding, and by the middle of August a considerable field of wheat was lying ready for the expected rains which should bring up the seed and give the plant a start for the winter. Fortunately, a shower fell very soon after seeding was done, and the tiny spires rose numerously from the black soil, which furnished a striking background of color for the deep green hue of the springing grain.

Meantime, the ladies had not been inactive. Nettie had interceded for the possession of a plat of ground near the house which she daily hoed, keeping down every weed and encouraging the few plants she had sown to energetic growth. Deborah often assisted her, and they worked now harmoniously together. The latter had so far forgotten her old nature, or so far profited by the admonitions of her lord, as to be no longer an object of dread and antipathy. She began to show considerable interest in the progress of the work, and once inadvertently spoke of the place as "hum." She was also detected in the act of supervising the

work of breaking and seeding the former sod. The household, if not absolutely happy, was at least outwardly harmonious. So near the close of August, the contrast between the wild, unbroken expanse of prairie plain and the beginnings of cultivation, while not marvelous, was decided and most auspicious. The Utopian dream seemed possible of fulfillment.

(To be continued.)

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